

Bad Day

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Lucas opened the door to his quarters and all but threw himself face down onto his bunk. He buried his head deep into his pillow and let out a loud, muffled cry of frustration as he pounded his fist against the mattress. He got up and flicked on the stereo, then threw himself back onto his bunk, as the beat began to pound from the small powerful speakers. He sighed deeply and wished the entire day just hadn't happened.

First he'd overslept, waking almost an hour late for his shift in the biometrics lab with Dr Westphalen. She hadn't been at all happy with his tardiness and had given him a full 20 minute lecture on the value and responsibility of a good work ethic, before she would actually let him get to work. She'd been so riled up that he hadn't had a chance to explain to her how he'd been up half the night trying and failing to track down the communications problem in one of Ortiz's whiskers. Only to discover that the problem wasn't with the communications system at all, it had been a mechanical failure with the power systems of the little machine.

His morning work in the lab hadn't gone well at all. Apart from the usual constant interruptions from other staff asking him, usually inane, questions about their computers. Questions they could have answered themselves if they had tried, he had some how managed to

incorrectly label several samples and an entire experimental batch had to be discarded. That mistake had cost Dr Westphalen and her staff several days of work. Since that, he'd caught several barely disguised, and very disgruntled looks from many of the lab researchers.

Just before lunch his stomach had betrayed the fact that he hadn't had breakfast that morning by growling embarrassingly loudly. Dr Westphalen had given him another lengthy lecture about his eating (or lack of) habits. Lucas took some comfort in the fact that she hadn't asked him about his dinner the previous night. He hadn't had one. If she had known that, Lucas was sure that, not only would the lecture have been longer and louder, she would almost certainly have gone with him to the mess and watched him like a hawk while he ate. Instead she had sent him off to the mess by himself, his ears still ringing from her tirade, and with strict instructions to have a full lunch.

Lunch hadn't been the escape Lucas had hope it would be. He'd been pleasantly surprised to see both Ben and Tim sharing a table when he arrived and had happily taken a seat at the same table. Tim was animatedly telling Ben how he and his family had conspired to give their father a great birthday surprise. Tim told them how, even though he hadn't been able to be there, he and his father had shared a long vid discussion, which had made him feel good. Lucas had sat with his friends as they discussed their families wearing a smile on his face, while inside he had been wilting. As soon as he judged he wouldn't raise either of his friends suspicions, he made an excuse to leave. He told them he was working with Dr Westphalen and didn't want to be late. It was the truth, just not the whole truth. Dr Westphalen had told him not to come back for at least an hour, and given her current mood with him, he wasn't planning to argue.

Lucas had decided to spend the remainder of his break time with Darwin and had gone down to the moon pool to play with him. Only to find out the dolphin had just gone out to feed and wasn't due back for hours. He'd been sitting on the edge of the pool, wagging his feet in the water, when Katie had called out to him from across the room. She had asked if he would mind taking a pile of reports up to Commander Ford on the Bridge. He hadn't had anything better to do so he'd agreed. Curiosity had gotten to him, and he'd been flicking through the reports as he walked toward the mag-lev. Rounding the corner he walked squarely into the back of another crewman knocking them both to the deck. The reports had gone flying in all directions and the other crewman had dropped his coffee, much of it had spilled onto Commander Ford's reports. The other crewman, angry with Lucas for knocking him down and messing up his uniform, had stalked off without helping him up. Lucas had tried to clean the stains from the papers as best he could but had only succeeded in making the mess worse.

Arriving on the bridge he'd tried several times to get Ford's attention, so he could give him the reports but the commander was too busy running a bridge drill to be distracted. Finally he'd left the reports with Ortiz, and asked him to pass them on to Ford. Ortiz had nodded but barely paid attention either, since he was waiting for Ford's next orders. Lucas hadn't bothered trying to explain the coffee stains, no one had been listening, instead he'd gone back to the lab.

Westphalen's mood hadn't improved while he'd been gone and Lucas had spent an extremely stressful afternoon, trying very hard not to make any mistakes. Many of the other lab staff had rightly identified him as being the cause of their boss's very bad mood. Most had decided to stay away from him either because they were angry with him themselves, or because they hadn't wanted to get caught in Westphalen's line of fire. Either way, it had made for a lonely afternoon. Lucas had almost wished one of them had had a stupid question to ask about their computers, but mysteriously everyone 's computers seemed to be working perfectly.

Finally, the day had been over and Lucas had been able to escape to his room. He pulled the pillow off from his face, where it had ended up, and stuffed it back under his head. He closed his eyes and let the aggressive beat of the music take him. He was so caught up in the beat, that he didn't hear the knock at his door or moments later the door open. He opened his eyes when the music volume suddenly dropped to a less insane level.

The Captain stood beside his stereo. "Bad day?" he asked.

Lucas nodded. "And then some," he replied, almost groaning.

"Me too. Want to get some coffee?" Bridger said, nodding his head toward the door.

Lucas smiled and got off the bed. He reached behind the captain and flicked off the sound system "You're buying," he told the Captain as he passed him, heading for the hall.

Finita.

End  
file.